GRETA'S CITY — AND WHY WE MIGHT NEVER BUILD IT

I. The Future We're Shown

The future we are shown
today is loud.
It shines.
It accelerates.
It grows upward and outward,
endlessly rehearsing the
same promise:
that speed equals progress,
and scale equals success.
Shenzhen and NEOM are its

purest expressions.
They are not cities so much as declarations.
They declare that the future belongs to those who move fastest.
That complexity can be solved by computation.
That human life will adapt to whatever system proves most efficient.
They are not wrong.
They are simply incomplete.
Because the question they never ask is the one that

matters most:
What kind of future can a human nervous system actually survive?

II. Greta’s City Is Not a Rejection of the Future

Let’s be precise.
A Greta City is not nostalgic.
Not pastoral.
Not anti-technology.
Not anti-urban.
It is not a retreat.
It is an escalation in a different direction.
Where Shenzhen escalates speed,
Greta’s City escalates discipline.
Where NEOM escalates control,
Greta’s City escalates

restraint.
This is not softness. This is strength of a different kind.
The strength to say: enough.

III. The Core Difference: Power vs. Control

Shenzhen and NEOM are cities of power.
Power over space.
Power over labor.
Power over time.
Power over nature.
Greta's City would be a city of

control — but not in the authoritarian sense.

Control over:
growth
consumption
expansion
tempo

visibility
The most radical idea in the project is this:
The future does not need to be maximized.
That single idea places it in direct opposition to every dominant model of modern development.
IV. What the City Actually Looks Like

This is where people get it wrong.
It would not be green. It

would not be cute. It would not be soft.
It would be austere.
Architecturally:
heavy materials
low profiles
long horizontal lines
no glass towers
no branding
no spectacle
Think: Nordic infrastructure. Japanese restraint.
Brutalist honesty softened by time.
The city would look decided,

not expressive.
No skyline. No icons. No tourist logic.
Just permanence.

V. The True Radical Move: Designing Time

This is the part that makes it

revolutionary.
Shenzhen controls space.
NEOM controls movement.
Greta's City controls time.

- Work hours are fixed.
- Night is dark.
- Silence is protected.
- Construction pauses seasonally.
- Growth has an upper limit.

Nothing runs 24/7 unless it must.
The city does not optimize productivity. It protects psychological continuity.

That is its rebellion.

VI. Technology Without Spectacle

There is AI. There is automation. There is advanced infrastructure. But it does not perform. No glowing dashboards. No

public screens. No gamification of life.
Technology exists only where it reduces burden — never where it increases stimulation.
In this city, the most advanced systems are the least visible.
That alone would make it feel alien to us.

VII. Why the West Cannot Build It

Because it would expose a

truth too uncomfortable to face:
That most of our crises are not technical. They are existential.
That we already have the tools. What we lack is the courage to stop.
A Greta City would prove that:
sustainability requires limits
freedom requires boundaries
progress requires refusal
And that is a message no growth-based society wants to hear.

So instead, we build louder futures. Faster ones. Ones that don’t force reflection.

VIII. Why It Would Outlast Everything Else

Not because it is perfect. Not because it is moral.
But because it is habitable.
It does not demand constant adaptation. It does not exhaust its inhabitants. It does not require belief in endless progress.

It simply continues.
And in a century defined by burnout, that may be the most radical achievement of all.

IX. The Uncomfortable Conclusion

Greta's City will probably

never be built.
Not because it is unrealistic.
But because it asks too much of us.
It asks us to choose restraint over expansion. Continuity over dominance. Enough over more.
And that choice is harder than any engineering problem.
Still, the idea persists.
Because once you've imagined a future that doesn't scream for attention

— one that simply holds — you can’t quite unsee how loud the world has become. And maybe that’s the point.